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## Recollections of Early Brookville

*MS. of John M. Johnson*

[These interesting reminiscences of early Brookville and notable personages residing there three-quarters of a century ago are from a manuscript submitted to us by Mr. John Johnson, of Irvington, Indianapolis, who found it among the papers of his father, John M. Johnson, now deceased. The latter was for many years a resident of Brookville, and long in public life in that city. The manuscript seems to have been written about a quarter of a century ago.]

**I**T has been fifty years since I crossed the beautiful Ohio river and stood upon the soil of Indiana. I pass over my peregrinations until I arrived at the then famed town of Brookville—the great town of the State and the residence of its great men.

The first residence I stopped at in Brookville was that of James Noble, then U. S. Senator. His residence was on the street west of the public square. It was an humble-looking one-and-a-half story log house weather boarded and painted white. Before the parlor room door was a portico. The parlor floor was covered with a red Turkey carpet (the only imported carpet then in town except perhaps at Judge Test's). Before the hearth was a handsome rug with the figure of a deer lying down on it. When you entered the parlor you met a fine-looking lady above the medium size, with a ruffled cap, who attended to the receptions at the senatorial mansion—a worthy partner of Senator Noble. Mary Noble, Hannah Gallion and Betsy McCarty were among the excellent ladies who then resided in Brookville, and who, in the exercise of "women's rights," milked their own cows, churned their own butter and made their own brooms.

The old brick court house (which occupied the site of the present one) was a square building in the center of which ran up a cupola. On the top of the steeple was the carved representation of an eagle with spreading wings. Through the court-room below ran the bar, made tight, with two gates to enter. The inside was for the lawyers, and the outside, paved with brick, was the lobby for the people who came to hear the lawyers plead. On the inside were the Grand and Petit Jury boxes. On the west side was the judge's bench, raised nearly up to the ceiling.

A winding stairs ran up in one corner to the upper story, where were the Grand and Petit Jury rooms. In the cupola was then placed a triangle, put up by William Hoyt, an ingenious mechanic, to perform the office of a bell by means of hammers striking on the base of the triangle. It gave forth a clear, sharp sound which could be heard farther than the sound of a bell.

A little east of the south-east corner of the court house stood the old log jail. This necessary edifice encroached near the residence of one of the citizens; hence, upon a dark night a number of his friends and "divers other persons to the Grand Jurors unknown" concluded they would abate it as a nuisance; hence, in the morning not one log was left upon another. Another log jail, however, was built near where now stands your "Burnett House," and which afterward performed the office of Grassmuck's stable. This jail was celebrated for having been the residence of Fields, an old Revolutionary soldier, who was convicted of murder and pardoned under the gallows by Governor Ray, to the great disappointment of a large concourse of people who had assembled to witness his execution. No man was ever hung in Franklin county. An amusing occurrence of "jail delivery" took place whilst Robert John was sheriff and jailor. A man was confined in jail on a charge of horse stealing. His wife visited him and remained with him over night. In the morning the prisoner, dressed in his wife's clothes, mounted her horse and made his escape. It was afterward found, to the amusement of the people, that it was the man who rode away and the woman who was left imprisoned.

The public square was not fenced in except the "stray pen," on the south-east corner. The public well was a little south of the south-east corner of the court house. It was over ninety feet deep. The water was drawn by means of a windlass. An old man whom the people called Death drew water for the public. He was, indeed, the picture of death.

On the south-east corner of the square, on Main Burgess street, stood the "Brookville Hotel," the leading tavern for many years. Mine host, Robert John then and there catered to the way-worn traveler, and if any man could cheer his guests by conversation, he was the man. On the corner south of the public square was standing the "Yellow Tavern," which

had been built at an early day by James Knight. It was then kept by William Campbell, a tall, portly man. The tavern, while kept by him, was a place of great resort. He was a hospitable man, generous to a fault, and never turned off a traveler because he was destitute of money. In the upper part of town was J. Adder's tavern, with the sign of the green tree, which was a familiar object to the vision of the passers-by for many years. This tavern was a great stopping place for wagoners and drivers. John Adder was a tall, dark-complected man, and universally esteemed. He was once recorder of the county. This tavern, when I first came to town, was kept by Dr. Haynes, who also taught school in it.

The newspaper then published in the town was, I believe, called the *Brookville Inquirer*. Robert John was the editor, and subsequently there was associated with him I. N. Hanna, a sprightly and talented young man. The editors, however, soon got at loggerheads. During the ensuing presidential canvass Robert John was for John Quincy Adams, and I. N. Hanna for Henry Clay. An editorial would therefore come out for Adams followed by another, signed "Junior Editor," for Clay; which created considerable sensation among the politicians of Brookville—and, indeed, all the citizens were politicians.

The old M. E. church was a brick building standing on the bluff in the northern part of town, and was the only meeting-house in town. It was once partly blown down and repaired, and is still standing as a monument of olden times. The Rev. Augustus Jocelyn, a Methodist preacher, ministered to the people in godly things at this church. He was a man of no ordinary talents. He was a tall man, about six feet high, bald-headed, but wore a wig. He had cultivated oratory and had graceful gestures, with distinct articulation. His figures were grand, and he illustrated his sermons by philosophy, politics and history as well as from the Bible. He had generally among his auditors the most enlightened citizens of Brookville. He preached the sermon at the time Fields wasn't hung. He was also a school-teacher and an editor.

The college at which I graduated was an humble frame building in the east bottom, which had been a residence and is still standing. Dr. Isaac G. John was then the teacher. The old

teachers that the citizens still talked of and whose memory they revered were Judge Laughlin and Solomon Allen. Dr. John afterwards became a promising physician, but died in the morning of life.

The land office at that time was at Brookville for the sale of the U. S. lands in the New Purchase, and the land sales were then going on. Gen. Robert Hanna was register. He resided in the large brick house in the northern part of town (called "Tinker Town") in which Dr. Berry now resides. His office was immediately opposite him on the west side of the street. Gen. Hanna in stature was a little below medium size; was a man of talents and a good electioneerer; dressed plain, frequently on election day appearing with moccasins and hunting-shirt. He was a delegate to the convention that framed the Constitution in 1816, and was the first sheriff under the Territorial and State governments.\* When the land office was taken to Indianapolis he removed there, and afterward held several official stations with credit. He continued to reside at or near Indianapolis until he met with his melancholy death by a railroad car.

Lazarus Noble was the receiver of public monies. His office was in the large brick building immediately east of the court house, which belonged to the Masonic lodge. He was a tall, handsome man, with agreeable manners, and a brother of Senator James Noble. He married Margaret Vance, the accomplished daughter of Capt. Samuel Vance, of Lawrenceburg. When the land office was removed he died, on his way to Indianapolis, at Judge Mount's, about ten miles from Brookville.†

#### MILES EGGLESTON.

When you entered the old brick court house which I have described the first objects that struck your attention were three men on the elevated judges' bench. In the center you beheld a good-looking gentleman, rather below the middle size, with a good head, leaning a little to one side; with ruffles protruding out of his bosom; well-dressed but a little disposed to slovenliness. This was Miles C. Eggleston, President Judge of the Third Judicial Circuit. He was appointed President Judge at the organi-

\*The first sheriff of Franklin county, Mr. Johnson doubtless means.

†At the town of Metamora.

zation of the State government, and held the office for over twenty-one years. He was a Virginian, and migrated to Brookville during the territorial government. He had a liberal education, was a good Latin scholar, and indulged the habit of quoting Latin among the bar. He was admitted to the bar under the territorial government. He was not a great advocate before a jury but was eminently qualified for a judge.

On either side of the President sat a plain-looking farmer (we then had two associate judges)—on his right hand David Mount, and on his left John Hanna. They had such implicit confidence in the legal abilities of Judge Eggleston that they scarcely ever differed with him in opinion. Judge Hanna, however, sometimes took the responsibility of differing with him. When he did so he always cited Judge Grimke, of South Carolina (Judge Hanna being from that State). Judge Eggleston was justly regarded as one of the best judges of the State. His charges to the jury were clear and clothed in fine language, and were listened to with the utmost attention by them. He was as pure and upright a judge as Lord Hale. The people of the county had such confidence in him that they would quote his decisions before those of the Supreme Court. He was looked to in those days with the same veneration as the late Judge McDonald during the present. He presided in a number of prosecutions for murder in which were engaged the most eminent counsel of the day, and his decisions were regarded with the highest respect.

Judge Eggleston was a man of fine literary attainments. He wrote well. He once delivered a Fourth-of-July oration at Brookville which was published and considered by the literary men of the day as a fine specimen of eloquence. He never engaged in politics. When off the bench he enjoyed himself among his friends, was excellent company and enjoyed a good joke. He was kind and indulgent to the young members of the bar, and seemed to court their society, and they would try a case with great confidence before him, even when opposed by old attorneys. He observed the utmost decorum and impartiality in court. He made the lawyers keep their places. There was no slipping to the judge and holding a private conversation—no leading lawyers leaning on the judges' seat. The attorneys had to address the

judges publicly from their places at the bar.

ENOCH M'CARTY.

In front of the judges' bench stood a large table, and at this table sat Enoch McCarty, clerk of the Franklin Circuit Court. He had been clerk under the territorial government, was re-elected upon the organization of the State government, and continued to serve for three successive terms of seven years each. He was regarded as the best clerk in the State. I was his deputy for several years. He was in stature about the medium size; a plain man; dressed plain; was easily approached, and was popular with the masses. He was familiarly called "'Nuch" McCarty. He was a man of good information, had read Blackstone, understood the general principles of the law, and was well versed in the statutes. The people, consequently, called on him for advice. He was a member of the Constitutional Convention of 1816. After retiring from the clerk's office he served as associate (judge?), and senator and representative to the State legislature. He died at a good old age, beloved by the people of the county, on his farm below Brookville.

NOAH NOBLE.

At the right of the clerk, below the "judgment seat," sat at a stand a tall, fine-looking man, dressed in black cloth, with a white neckerchief tied behind, rising gracefully, occasionally, to call Richard Roe and dispense orders to his bailiffs, Alex. Gardner, Jo. Gentry and others. He was fascinating in his manners, had a talismanic shake of the hand and was personally one of the best electioneers in the county. Indeed, it was a common saying that whenever he shook hands with a man he had him—I might say a woman too. He would be a great electioneer if he were living when the women vote. He wrote such an illegible hand that he couldn't read it himself when it got dry. A man once brought in a letter he had written to him for him to read. He couldn't read it till he found out what subject it was on. The man I have described was Noah Noble, sheriff of Franklin county afterward Governor of the State of Indiana. He also filled the offices of Representative to the State Legislature, Receiver of Public Moneys at Indianapolis, and Canal Commissioner. He died in the city of Indianapolis, much beloved.